

March 20, 2015

Re: SUPPORT SB 361 (increases penalties for animal cruelty) with the addition of language that would prevent gestation crates from being used in CT

Dear Co-chair Kennedy, Co-chair Albis, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Please accept this testimony in SUPPORT SB 361 with the addition of language that would prevent gestation crates from being used in Connecticut.

I support increasing the penalties for malicious and intentional animal cruelty, and ask that you add language to SB 361 that would prevent gestation crates from coming to Connecticut. The intensive confinement of farm animals is already here in Connecticut – chickens confined in tiny cages at KofKoff Egg Farms in eastern CT -- and I don't want to see further expansion of these types of cruel farming practices.

91% of Connecticut voters who want a ban on gestation crates.

A law preventing gestation crates will promote best practices that our local, Connecticut-based, sustainable farmers already follow; protect our family farmers by preventing out-of state factory farms from coming to Connecticut and ruining our rural communities; make state policy clear, which will enhance business opportunities for Connecticut farmers, whose animal welfare-oriented customers would know with certainty that gestation crates are not used here.

Nine states (including Rhode Island and Maine), and the European Union have passed legislation to outlaw gestation crates. Smithfield Foods, the nation's largest pig producer, and Cargill have already announced that they will end the confinement of sows in gestation crates in their company-owned facilities. Major corporations such as Nestle, McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, and more than 70 others have announced that they will end gestation crate use in their supply chains.

As more states legislate against this cruel practice, Connecticut could become an increasingly viable location for pork mega-factories.

The legislative proposal is simple: Amend the cruelty statutes (Title 53, Chapter 945) in order to "prohibit confinement of sows during gestation in a manner that prevents them from turning around freely, lying down, standing up, or fully extending their limbs." Please use language as provided in the 2015 testimony from The Humane Society of the United States' Connecticut State Director Annie Hornish.

Yours truly,

Niles Howard
24 East Avenue
New Canaan CT 06840